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VERSES

BY

W·H·MALLOCK·

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VERSES

VERSES

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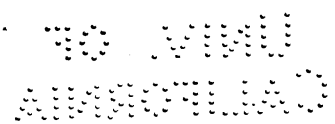

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TO MADAME DE * * * *

(FROM AN UNPUBLISHED NOVEL)

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

TO MADAME DE * * * *

(FROM AN UNPUBLISHED NOVEL)

I.

WHAT gift shall I give you? Suppose, if you please,
I had houses and acres and fashion and fame,
And a name,—Need I tell you, my friend, that of these
I could give you not one, dear—not even my name?

II.

But something I must give—a something with qualities
To move you or prove you. So since, as I've said,
I can't give the things that the world calls realities,
I bring you my hopes. Will you take them instead?

TO MADAME DE * * * *

III.

They are excellent hopes. I can speak, for I know them.
I've nursed them and reared them through good and through ill.
And they in return—you can't think what I owe them—
When all things had left me, they clung to me still.

IV.

As the days and the nights became lonelier and colder,
As I slept with a sigh, or awoke with a moan,
They were by me, to breathe, with their cheeks on my shoulder,
'Take courage: you shall not be always alone!'

V.

How simply they spoke! yet they chased my dejection;
For they hinted of one who should come through the gloom,
To the hearthstone of life with the fire of affection,
And should turn to a chamber what else were a tomb.

VI.

How trite were their phrases! Yet all that was tragic
Was touched by their voice, and receded from life:
For they sang a redemption, a passion and a magic
Into words such as home, and a hearth, and a wife:

VII.

Till what seems to the youth like a vain iteration
Of copy-book platitudes bought by the quire,
Was flamed on the man like a new revelation
Of the glory of God in a scripture of fire.

VIII.

Yes—that's what my hopes did. Despair and complaining
They turned into patience; and day after day,
When my darkness returned, like the clouds after raining,
They would soothe me and cheer me, and sing it away.

TO MADAME DE * * * *

IX.

Tell me, then—will you take them?—my gift that I'm bringing?
But before you accept them, there's this to be said—
'Tis merely that now they have done with their singing.
They are silent. I've killed them. I bring you my dead.

X.

Nay, turn not away in disgust from their faces.
Look at least on them once; and perhaps you will see
That to you, dear, my mute ones still speak from their places;
And you'll hear them, and murmur, 'He killed these for me.'

HAEC OMNIA DABO TIBI

HAEC OMNIA DABO TIBI

OH, World, whose days like sunlit waters glide,
Whose music links the midnight with the morrow,
Who, for thine own, hast beauty, power, and pride!
Oh, World, what art thou? And the World replied,
'A husk of pleasure round a heart of sorrow.'

Oh, child of God, thou who hast sought thy way
Where all this music sounds, this sunlight gleams,
'Mid pride and power and beauty day by day:
And what art thou? I heard my own soul say,
'A wandering sorrow in a world of dreams.'

THE SIBYL'S BOOKS

THE SIBYL'S BOOKS

LIFE is a Sibyl, who to Youth
Offers the golden books of Truth,
And Youth rejects them; for, indeed,
The dazzling lines are hard to read.
But what cares Life for that? She goes,
And in the fire a volume throws.
When Manhood ripens, as before
She offers still her dwindling store,
In vain:—till one day Age divines
What seems some meaning in the lines,
And starts, and stays her with the call,
'Bring your books back: I'll take them all.'
'Good,' cries the Sibyl, 'that's to say,
All that are undestroyed to-day.
Take them.' She spreads her bundle bare,
And not a single book is there.
'What's this?' She laughs. 'Ere man has learnt
To read my books, the books are burnt!'
'Life, you're a mockery!' 'Man,' is Life's reply,
'Without my books you know me. Such am I.'

HUMAN LIFE

HUMAN LIFE

LIKE smoke I vanish, though I burn like flame;
I flicker in the gusts of wrong and right,
A shining frailty in the guise of might,
Before, a nothing—and behind, a name.

TO 'VIOLET FANE'

TO 'VIOLET FANE'

(WRITTEN IN A COPY OF 'A ROMANCE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY')

FAR in an unseen world I place my treasure,
And in this near world, you:
But will you find that your world gives you pleasure,
Or I, that mine is true?

TO A CHILD

TO A CHILD

O DAINTY figure, floating hair,
O small face, turn and let me see!
Turn, Irma, turn! A child like you
Has always charm for me.

O sad as death, and soft as love,
What's this that I in you behold?
All life seems gazing from the eyes—
The eyes of eight years old.

All life! Why, child, what's life to you?
Your dog, your doll—a toy, a pet—
These are its joys:—and, for its griefs,
They're things as small. And yet,

TO A CHILD

Between your eyelids swims the look
  That says, 'My faith in prayer is o'er.'
Your mouth seems quivering to the lost,
  'Kiss me that kiss once more!'

Is this a fancy, do you think?
  Merely an idle fancy? Nay,
Your face but says before its time
  What soon your heart will say.

That look was moulded in the past,
  Before your father's days began;
And means what life will mean for you,
  And long has meant for man.

Those clear young eyes before they fade
  Shall scan their past, and read 'In vain.'
Irma, I see the stainless cheek
  Where life shall write a stain.

But ah! I see the fire which first
  Shall cast its soft disguise divine
O'er earth and heaven; and envy those
  For whom your eyes will shine.

TO A CHILD

Whose pulses shall be stirred by yours,
  And who, on the wet sands of youth,
Shall found that house of faiths and hopes
  Which poets dream is truth.

O happy dream, and happy they
  Who dream it one by one with you!
Ah! by your aid might I once more
  Dream, and believe it true;

Before once more I wake, as you
  And I, and all, must wake to feel
Their fair dreams broken one by one
  On Time's relentless wheel.

For love builds up, and life destroys;
  But well—however this may be,
Irma, ere love shall live for you
  He will be dead for me.

TO A DEAD DOG

TO A DEAD DOG

I.

WHERE are you now, little wandering
Life, that so faithfully dwelt with us,
Played with us, fed with us, felt with us,
Years we grew fonder and fonder in?

II.

You who but yesterday sprang to us,
Are we for ever bereft of you?
And is this all that is left of you—
One little grave and a pang to us?

TO ANOTHER DEAD DOG

TO ANOTHER DEAD DOG

THOU art gone to sleep, and we—
May we one day sleep like thee.
Prinny, were this heart of mine
Half so true, my dog, as thine,
I my weary watch should keep
For a something more than sleep.

WILL

WILL

"Oh, living will, that shalt endure."

WE strive to will the right; but what's our will?
A die whose casts we nickname good or ill,
Loaded by fate—a tendency, a taint,
Which Fate has dealt us. This with all her skill
Does Science prove: and this is man's complaint:
'Sinning, an idiot conscience stabs me still,
Which yet has no one blessing for restraint.'

MARGARET

MARGARET

OH, her cheek, her cheek was pale,
Her voice was hardly musical;
But your proud grey eyes grew tender
Child, when mine they met,
With a piteous self-surrender,
Margaret.

Child, what have I done to thee?
Child, what hast thou done to me?
How you froze me with your tone
That last day we met!
Your sad eyes then were cold as stone,
Margaret.

MARGARET

Oh, it all now seems to me
A far-off weary mystery!
Yet—and yet, her last sad frown
Awes me still, and yet—
In vain I laugh your memory down,
Margaret.

A NEW FRANCESCA

A NEW FRANCESCA

(MRS. SINCLAIR'S SONG IN THE 'NEW REPUBLIC')

'Passion-pale they met
And parted.'

LORD TENNYSON'S *Guinevere.*

DARLING, can you endure the liquid weather,
The jasmine-scented twilights, oh my dear?
Or do you still remember how together
We read the sad sweet Idyl 'Guinevere,'
Love, in one last year's twilight?
Galeotto fu il libro, e chi lo scrisse.[1]

Ah, the flowers smelt sweet, and all unheeding
Did I read to you that tender tale,
Oh, my love, until my voice, in reading
How those lovers greeted 'passion-pale,'
Trembled in the soft twilight.
Galeotto fu il libro, e chi lo scrisse.

Dante's *Inferno*, v. 137.

A NEW FRANCESCA

Then our eyes met, and then all was over—
  All the world receded cold and far;
And your lips were on my lips, my lover;
  And above us shook a silver star,
    Through depths of melting twilight.
Galeotto fu il libro, e chi lo scrisse.

Darling, no July will ever find us
  On this earth, together, more. Our fates
Were but a moment cheated. Then, behind us
  Shrilled his voice for whom Caïna[1] waits,
    Shattering our one sweet twilight.
Galeotto fu il libro, e chi lo scrisse.

I shall know no more of summer weather,
  Nought will be for me of glad or fair,
Till I join my darling, and together
  We go for ever on the accursed air,
    There in the dawnless twilight.
Galeotto fu il libro, e chi lo scrisse.

[1] Dante's *Inferno*, v. 107.

LINES WRITTEN AT CALAIS TO V. C. IN THE SOUTH OF EUROPE

LINES WRITTEN AT CALAIS TO V. C. IN THE SOUTH OF EUROPE

'Is there a wish for which you dare not pray?
Then pray to God to take that wish away.'

YESTERDAY a cloudless sky was glowing,
All the flowers were flowering yesterday;
And to-day a bitter east is blowing,
Flowerless all the flowers, the skies are grey.
Yesterday there breathed a life beside me—
Now the lips and eyes are far away.
Deep in memories of the past I hide me,
And I pray for her, whate'er betide me,
Every wish for which I dare to pray.

BOAT SONG

BOAT SONG

HOLLOW and vast, starred skies are o'er us,
  Bare to their blue profoundest height.
Waves and moonlight melt before us
  Into the heart of the lonely night.

Row, young oarsman, far out yonder,
  Over the moonlight's breathing breast.
Rest not—give us no pause to ponder;
  All things we can endure but rest.

Row, young oarsman; row, young oarsman;
  Into the crypt of the night we float.
Fair, faint moon-flames wash and wander—
  Wash and wander about our boat.

BOAT SONG

See how shadow and silver mingle
  Here on the wonderful wide bare sea;
And shall we sigh for the blinking ingle?
  Sigh for the old known chamber—we?

Not a fetter is here to bind us,
  Love and memory loose their spell.
Friends of the home we have left behind us,
  Prisoners of content, farewell!

Do we sigh for the old smiles tender—
  The homely love, and the pure repose?
Sighing bosoms, would ye surrender
  Sighs like ours for smiles like those?

Row, young oarsman, far out yonder,
  Over the moonlight's breathing breast.
Rest not—give us no pause to ponder.
  All things we can endure but rest!

Row, young oarsman; row, young oarsman;
  See how the diamonds drip from the oar.
What of the shore and friends? young oarsman,
  Never row us again to shore!

A PHILOSOPHIC LOVER

A PHILOSOPHIC LOVER

(TO THE WIFE OF AN OLD SCHOOLFELLOW)

LET others seek for wisdom's way
  In modern science, modern wit,—
I turn to love, for all that these,
  These two can teach, is taught by it.

Yes, all. In that first hour we met
  And smiled and spoke so soft and long, love,
Did wisdom dawn; and I began
  To disbelieve in right and wrong, love.

Then, as love's gospel clearer grew,
  And I each day your doorstep trod, love,
I learned that love was all in all,
  And rose to disbelieve in God, love.

A PHILOSOPHIC LOVER

Yes, wisdom's book! you taught me this,
  And ere I half had read you through, love,
I learned a deeper wisdom yet—
  I learned to disbelieve in you, love.

So now, fair teacher, I am wise,
  And free: 'tis truth that makes us free, love.
But you—you're pale! grow wise as I,
  And learn to disbelieve in me, love.

TO AN ENGAGED WOMAN

TO AN ENGAGED WOMAN

WHICH is the better, which the kinder part—
To leave you quite, to cast you quite aside,
And in one cold farewell to hide with art
The pain and passion nature will not hide;
Or still to hold and fold you to my heart,
And in a vain dream dream you still my bride,
Nor ever call one loving word the last,
Until the past become indeed the past?

This is the question which, this whole blank day,
I ask my heart, as I sit here alone,
Watching the dull waves break in Beaulieu bay;
And answer from my heart receive I none.
What makes it mute? you ask. I will not play
With hackneyed phrases. Oh, my own, my own,
There is no need to say my heart is breaking;
Pain makes it mute, although 'tis only aching.

TO AN ENGAGED WOMAN

Pain in my heart, and silence in my ears,
  Gloom in my eyes—my eyes and ears that miss
Your eyes and voice, and vague regrets and fears
  Clouding my thoughts—my life is come to this:
With one keen sense through all, that all my years
  Have closed their meaning in your hopeless kiss.
Ah! once again, before the moment slips,
Love, let me leave my life upon your lips.

What! do you chide me for that desperate cry,
  And say I tempt you? Yes, I feel you do.
Listen to me, then; I have this reply:
  Let Love, my loved one, judge 'twixt me and you.
Inquire of Love, who still stands lingering by,
  And gives us still his licence to be true,
And will not wholly leave us, till betwixt
My life and yours there is the great gulf fixed.

Ask Him, for He has made you one with me;
  You are with me, and around me everywhere.
I feel you in the mountains and the sea,
  And when I breathe you feed me in the air.
And oh, my soul's true soul, the thought of thee
  Moves me to pray, and mixes with my prayer.
Ask Him, for still—He still can point to-day
Towards Heaven, and say, 'In me behold the way.

TO AN ENGAGED WOMAN

Ask Him to-day. He will have said 'Farewell,'
  Farewell to you, farewell to me—to-morrow:
And where He dwelt another Love will dwell,
  With haggard, pitying eyes, and lips that borrow
Their hopeless sentence from the gates of Hell,
  'Through me the way is to the eternal sorrow';
And lure and warn us in the same low breath—
'Take life from me, but know my life is death.'

THE TOWER AT BEAULIEU REVISITED

THE TOWER AT BEAULIEU REVISITED

ONE true hour of love lies there,
Dead in the clear unburying air
Hear distracted Memory call,
'Who shall give it burial?'
Memory! thou of little wit,
There be three shall bury it.
Let the World, false, vain, and loud,
Be the grave-clothes and the shroud;
Let the Devil's Scorn of Good
Be the heavy coffin-wood;
And let false love be the clay
That hides all from the light of day.

LINES

LINES

HOMELESS man goes, even on life's sunniest slope,
And yet between two homes he takes his way—
Between to-morrow—that's the home of Hope—
And Happiness, whose home is yesterday.

Yet, man, complain not. Thank your fates instead,
And call them good, before they bring you worse—
The days when Hope shall in her home lie dead,
And Happiness forgotten fade in hers.

HIPPOLYTUS TO ARTEMIS

HIPPOLYTUS TO ARTEMIS

(AFTER EURIPIDES)

MINE own, my one desire,
Virgin most fair
Of all the virgin choir!
Hail, O most pure, most perfect, loveliest one!
Lo, in my hand I bear,
Woven for the circling of thy long gold hair,
Culled leaves and flowers, from places which the sun
The spring long shines upon,
Where never shepherd hath driven flock to graze,
Nor any grass is mown;
But there sound through all the sunny sweet warm
days,
Mid the green holy place,
The wild bee's wings alone.
Yea, and with jealous care
The maiden Reverence tends the fair things there,
And watereth all of them with sprinkling showers
Of pearled grey dew from a clear running river.

HIPPOLYTUS TO ARTEMIS

Whoso is chaste of spirit utterly,
May gather there the leaves and fruits and flowers—
    The unchaste, never.
But thou, O goddess, and dearest love of mine—
    Take, and about thine hair
    This anadem entwine—
    Take, and for my sake wear,
Who am more to thee than other mortals are,
    Whose is the holy lot
As friend with friend to walk and talk with thee,
Hearing thy sweet mouth's music in mine ear,
    But thee beholding not.

THE SEA NYMPHS TO PROMETHEUS

THE SEA NYMPHS TO PROMETHEUS

(AFTER AESCHYLUS)

SUFFERER, fear not, love hath sent us,
Yearning with compassion we!
We have stilled our fathers' tongue, fain to prevent us,
We have left our clear homes in the deep blue sea.
We have travelled far
In our wingèd car,
For thee, for thee!

For through our still, wave-dripping grottoes rang
A hideous brazen clang,
Breaking our noonday dreamings in our peaceful sea.
With unsandalled feet
Breathless and fleet
To our wingèd car we sprang,
For thee, for thee.

CHRISTMAS THOUGHTS, BY A MODERN THINKER

CHRISTMAS THOUGHTS, BY A MODERN THINKER

(AFTER MR. MATTHEW ARNOLD)

THE windows of the church are bright;
'Tis Christmas Eve; a low wind breathes;
And girls with happy eyes to-night
Are hanging up the Christmas wreaths;

And village voices by-and-by
Will reach my windows through the trees,
With wild, sweet music: 'Praise on high
To God: on earth, good-will and peace.'

Oh, happy girls, that hang the wreaths!
Oh, village fiddlers, happy ye!
Christmas to you still truly breathes
Good-will and peace; but not to me.

CHRISTMAS THOUGHTS

Yes, gladness is your simple rôle,
  Ye foolish girls, ye labouring poor;
But joy would ill beseem my soul—
  To sigh, my part is, and endure.

For once as Rousseau stood, I stand
  Apart, made picturesque by grief—
One of a small world-weary band,
  The orphans of a dead belief.

Through graveyards lone we love to stray,
  And sadly the sad tombs explore,
And contradict the texts which say
  That we shall rise once more.

Our faith is dead, of course; and grief
  Fills its room up; and Christmas pie
And turkey cannot bring relief
  To such as Obermann and I.

Ah, Obermann, and might I pass
  This English Christmas-tide with thee,
Far by those inland waves whose glass
  Brightens and breaks by Meillerie;

Or else amongst the sternest dells
  Alp shags with pine, we'd mix our sighs,
Mourn at the sound of Christmas bells,
  Sniff at the smell of Christmas pies.

But thou art dead; and long, dank grass
  And wet mould cool thy tired, hot brain;
Thou art lain down, and now, alas!
  Of course you won't get up again.

Yet, Obermann, 'tis better so;
  For if, sad slumberer, after all
You were to re-arise, you know
  'Twould make us feel so very small.

Best bear our grief this manlier way,
  And make our grief be balm to grief;
For if in faith sweet comfort lay,
  There lurks sweet pride in unbelief.

Wherefore, remembering this, once more
  Unto my childhood's church I'll go,
And bow my head at that low door
  I passed through standing, long ago.

CHRISTMAS THOUGHTS

I'll sit in the accustomed place,
  And make, while all the unlearnèd stare,
A mournful, atheistic face
  At their vain noise of unheard prayer.

Then, while they hymn the heavenly birth
  And angel voices from the skies,
My thoughts shall go where Weimar's earth
  For ever darkens Goethe's eyes;

Till sweet girls' glances from their books
  Shall steal towards me, and they sigh:
'How intellectual he looks,
  And yet how wistful! And his eye

Has that vain look of baffled prayer!'
  And then when church is o'er I'll run,
Comb misery into all my hair,
  And go and get my portrait done.

STROPHES

(FROM 'A SONG AFTER MOONRISE')

STROPHES

(FROM 'A SONG AFTER MOONRISE')

STROPHE I.

I BOWED my laurel'd head
Above my lyre, and said:
'What new song shall I sing across the strings?
Madden'd for whose new sake
What new noise shall I make?'
And I answered: 'Lo, I will sing of no new things;
I will turn to her once more
I have sung so oft before—
Freedom—and worship her, and curse some kings.
Set on her motherly knee,
Her nursing arms round me,
I will cling about her neck as a child clings,
Re-wounding with my kiss
Each scarce-healed cicatrice,
Doing to her divers and disgusting things;
Whilst in her ears my chaunt,
Re-risen and reboant,
Sounds as one sounds who, being senseless, sings.

STROPHES FROM

STROPHE II.

OH, one cant name of many names I have chosen—
Freedom—lo, once again I call to thee;
By the cold earth's iron-bound ends and oceans frozen,
By the rivers that run billowing to the sea,
By the lisp and laughter of Spring in leafy places,
By the storms that follow and the calms that flee,
By the pale light flung in men's funereal faces
From holocausts of kings, we burn to thee;
By the seas that link us and the lands that sever,
By the foes upon our weather-side and lee—
By all these things and all other things whatever,
We call and howl and squeak and shriek to thee,
Calling thee early and late,
Wild, inarticulate,
Calling and bawling that thou set something free.

'A SONG AFTER MOONRISE'

STROPHE III.

BUT where is the something—a land
  In the east, or the uttermost west—
    A land with a grievance, a curse?
      I heed not her name or her place,
So shame on her brow be a brand,
  So she have but a white scourged breast,
    And a name that will scan in verse;
      And I ask for the royal race,
  For the land oppŕest.

But where shall I find her—where?
  I mean the land with a wrong
    Not already outworn
      By those that have sung for her sake.
For Byron and bards that were,
  Were singing of Freedom long
    Before I was thought of or born,
      And they plucked all the plums from the
        cake,
From the cake of song.

STROPHES FROM

Strophe IV.

Ah, but would that I
Had been the first of these!
I would have drained them dry,
These themes of war and peace,
Nor have left one song to sing of Italy,
Nor a poet's picking on the bones of Greece.

Then with flowers and fire,
And bitter foam and wine,
And fangs and fierce desire,
And things I call divine,
I would nauseate so the world that no man's lyre
Should again be struck to a note I had once made mine.

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UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

'A SONG AFTER MOONRISE'

EPODE

I HUNG my laurel'd head
Down on my lyre, and said:
'What answer does my sovereign, Freedom, make?'
And in the air I heard
Not even a whispered word
From her for whom my very lungs do ache,
And, as an addled egg is, is my brain:
Wherefore for her most royal and holy sake,
I think I will behowl her once again.
Hear me, O goddess! for it indeed is I
That call thee, at thy knees,
And don't be frightened, please,
At the many things I shall adjure thee by.
Come to us, bright in clear re-arisen ascendency,
Loosen o'er us all thine orient oriflamme!
By the power Mat Arnold calls 'a stream of tendency,'
By the Christianity we have proved a sham,
By the lowering name that darkened Hebrew story
We have turned to Thou art not, that was once I Am;
We thy singers, we thy sons that work Thee glory
With the unburnt offerings of our worthless verses
Heaped on thy shrine, adjure thee and adore thee:
I, the clamouring herd's choregus, I implore thee

FROM 'A SONG AFTER MOONRISE'

By all the things that we bemire with curses—
That is, by all the holy things that are,
Rise and make manifest upon us thy mercies,
Rise o'er us all a large and lovely star.
For the night is now far spent; the air gives warning
With a dewy stir and chillness of the morning,
And the wan dark whitens on the eastern hill.
Burn through the east, grow large, and lighten, until
In the saffron of the sunrise we discern thee
Shining and trembling like a tear of gladness.
Draw near to us, we will love thee, we will learn thee—
Learn thee to the heart, and love thee even to madness—
If thou wilt only hear us in our crying,
Across the night,
Conjuring thee by this our rhythmic sighing—
Our songs which might
Have many senses, but which have not one sense
A man may see;
By the sounding and the fluent foam of nonsense
We shower on thee;
By the shallow and the babbling things, our mothers,
From whom we spring;
By the barking and the braying things, our brothers,
Like whom we sing;
By all the fatuous things, our near relations,
That chaunt and cheer us;
By the people, and the people's demonstrations,
Oh, Freedom, hear us!

THE AUTHOR OF 'SONGS BEFORE SUNRISE'

THE AUTHOR OF 'SONGS BEFORE SUNRISE'

OH, master of music and thunder,
And measures that sway like the sea,
Could only my reason take wing
And follow my heart as you sing,
Singer in winter of spring,
To the future, and welcome the wonder
Awaiting a world of the free;—

Then would my lips which are cold
Be on fire as your lips are, and I,
Adding my song to your own,
As a rill to an ocean of tone,
As an echo you strike from a stone,
On the rulers who rule as of old,
I would turn, and upbraid them, and cry—

'What! are ye deaf to our warning—
Drowned in your dreams? But we,
Faithful and few on the height,
We have watched long, long, for the light;
And discern we at last through the night
That the long low lights of the morning
Are already awake on the sea.'

Then were my soul as a note
Longing to startle the dark—
Then were it fain from the frore
Earth, as the lark does, to soar
To the watch-towers of morning, and pour
As you do, o'er earth through the throat
Of a bugle the songs of a lark!

PULVERIS EXIGUI MUNUS

PULVERIS EXIGUI MUNUS

(IN THE MANNER OF MR. MATTHEW ARNOLD)

SOFTLY the evening descends,
Violet and soft. The sea
Adds to the silence, below
Pleasant and cool on the beach
Breaking; yes, and a breeze
Calm as the twilight itself
Furtively sighs through the dusk,
Listlessly lifting my hair,
Fanning my thought-wearied brow.
Thus I stand in the gloom
Watching the moon-track begin
Quivering to die like a dream
Over the far sea-line
To the unknown region beyond.

'So for ages hath man
Gazed on the ocean of time
From the shores of his birth, and, turning
His eyes from the quays, the thronged
Marts, the noise and the din
To the far horizon, hath dreamed
Of a timeless country beyond.
Vainly: for how should he pass,
Being on foot, o'er the wet
Ways of the unplumbed waves?
How, without ship, should he pass
Over the shipless sea
To the timeless country beyond?

'Ah, but once—once long ago,
Came there a ship white-sailed
From the country beyond, with bright
Oarsmen, and men that sang;
Came to humanity's coasts,
Called to the men on the shore,
Joyously touched at the port.
Then did time-weary man
Climb the bulwarks, the deck
Eagerly crowding. Anon
With jubilant voices raised,
And singing, "When Israel came
Out of Egypt," and whatso else

PULVERIS EXIGUI MUNUS

In the Psalm is written, they passed
Out of the ken of the land,
Over the far sea-line,
To the unknown region beyond.

'Where are they now, then—they
That were borne out of sight by the ship—
Our brothers, of times gone by?
Why have they left us here
Solemn, dejected, alone,
Gathered in groups on the shore?
Why? For we, too, have gazed
O'er the waste of waters, and watched
For a sail as keenly as they.
Ah, wretched men that we are!
On our haggard faces and brows
Aching, a wild breeze fawns
Full of the scents of the sea,
Redolent of regions beyond.
Why, then, tarries the ship?
When will her white sail rise
Like a star on the sea-line? When?

'When?—And the answer comes
From the sailless face of the sea,
"Ah, vain watchers, what boots
The calm of the evening?

PULVERIS EXIGUI MUNUS

Have ye not watched through the day
Turbulent waves, the expanse
Endless, shaken with storm,
And ask ye where is the ship?
Deeper than plummet can dive
She is bedded deep in the ooze,
And over her tall mast floats
The purple plain of the calm."

'Yes—and never a ship,
Since this is sunken, will come
Ever again o'er the waves—
Nay, not even the craft with the fierce
Steersman, him of the marsh,
Livid, with wheels of flame
Circling his eyes, to smite
The lingering soul with his oar.
Not that even; but we
Drop where we stand one by one
On the shingles and sands of time,
And cover in taciturn gloom,
With only perhaps some tear,
Each for his brother the hushed
Heart and the limitless dreams
With a little gift of sand.'

FROM VICTOR HUGO

FROM VICTOR HUGO

THE Tomb said to the Rose,
'Those tears the mornings weep
Into thy petals deep,
What does love's flower with those?'

The Rose said to the Tomb,
'And thou, what dost thou—say—
With that which day by day
Drops in thy gulfs of gloom?'

The Rose said, 'I do this:
Out of each tear I make
A soul of perfume wake—
Honey and ambergris.'

'Poor flower,' the Tomb said, 'I,
Out of each clod that slips
Mute through my earthen lips,
Make a winged soul on high.'

LINES ON THE RIVIERA

LINES ON THE RIVIERA

(WRITTEN IN AN ALBUM)

AH! what ailed you to bid rhyme for you me—me who have done with rhyme?
Would you ask of a tree figs, when you know well it is past the time?
See the lute that I breathed love to; it hangs now on a broken string:
One song only of all songs have I now courage or heart to sing.
Oh, my luminous land, glowing with blue under and blue above,
Land whose violets breathe sweeter than all mouths that have murmured love!
Oh, my land of the palm, olive and aloe, land of the sun, the sea,
Still my heart is a child's, turning in long longing to thee, to thee!

'THE SOULS'

(TO MISS M—— T—— IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION)

'THE SOULS'

(TO MISS M—— T—— IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION)

(March 29th, 1890)

YOU asked me, Miss M——, one day last November,
If a certain production was due to my pen—
A Paper on 'Souls.' I replied, you remember,
That I'd not even seen it,—I've done so since then.

Well—you said it was good: and—ah me!—when you said it,
How I wished I could claim what had pleased you, as mine!
But now, to be candid, I own, since I've read it,
That the treatment seems poor, for a subject so fine.

'THE SOULS'

All the same, if 'tis really a thing you see wit in,
  There's nothing so low, or so light, or so high,
That I could not have sunk or have soared to have written,
  Could it only have won me a glance from your eye.

But vain are such wishes. A glance from Miss M——,
  What language of mine could command or control?
I never could master the psychical argot
  That a soul, as I gather, expects from a soul.

For the souls are like flowers, that look out from the border
  Of Eden, on us the poor children of Eve;
Oh, marvellous flowers, we are not of your order,
  'Tis an order we cannot so much as conceive.

You were born of some pollen that sinks and that settles
  From heaven! But we from the red earth are grown,
And the dust and the flesh are a worm in our petals,
  That cankers the blossoms before they are blown.

Whilst you!—Why, it seems that the dew remains
fresh on
Your bright lives for ever. Some mystical means
Enables you still to retain the possession
Of all that our twenties have left with our teens.

Your names in themselves—I run over a few of them—
Proclaim what you are, and confirm what I say.
I allude to your Ladies. I know one or two of them,
And I know two are 'constant,' I think one is 'gay.'

We are neither. We shift, or fate shifts our devotion,
From this love to that love: and still as we roam,
We find that our hearts, at each fresh locomotion,
Are heavier and sorer and farther from home.

You discuss Aristotle and Mill: on the issue
Of creeds and of systems your brains are employed:
But for us, they are merely the rags of a tissue
Once woven to shelter man's eyes from the void.

'THE SOULS'

You keep talking of faith, of devotion, and purity,
  Things deep and things high are your favourite themes.
We have dreamed of them too; but our songs, in maturity,
  Have sunk to one burden, 'Good-bye to our dreams.'

For you, Life's a garden, whose vista discloses
  The Heavens at the end; but it looms on our sight
Like a thicket of briars with a few withered roses,
  And beyond is the night, is the night, is the night.

Oh, sons, and oh, daughters of art and of culture,
  Forget for a moment your play and your parts,
And take pity upon us, for whom time is a vulture
  Which leaves us our livers and feeds on our hearts.

What I say is in earnest. I urge you to think of it.
  Miss M——, I'm specially speaking to you;
For your set is perfection, and you are the pink of it.
  Bethink you, for us is there nought you can do?

You might surely explain by what mental appliance
You are able to fix the illusions of youth.
You might save us from memory, and save us from Science,
Which is leading us down to the death which is truth.

I say 'us.' You'll remark that in these my petitions
I've invariably spoken of 'us' and of 'we';
But, well—like all patriots and most politicians,
When I speak about 'us,' I am thinking of 'me.'

Just a word in your ear. I am sure I should suit you all.
Suppose you admit me as one of your band.
I'll admire you—the feeling of course must be mutual:
I'll discuss with you all things I least understand.

I'll take interest in life with a faith that ne'er frets itself,
And I'll bravely forget, as I warm to the task,
That such interest is merely despair that forgets itself,
And that laughter is merely a sigh with a mask.

And such verbs as 'admire' and 'rise higher' and
'aspire'
I will conjugate daily in all moods and tenses;
And I'll prove on the whole that I must be a soul,
For I'll show you I've quite taken leave of my senses.

TO IRMA

I

TO IRMA

THE world was bright with many a prize
Of power and pride for me.
I looked at thee with dreaming eyes,
And left the world for thee.

With waking eyes—with eyes bereft
Of dreams I see thee now.
The paltriest prize I loved and left
Was not so vain as thou.

I'll seek again for power and pride:
Ah no!—Too late I see
That all things else are dross beside
My broken dream of thee.

CIRCUMSTANCE

CIRCUMSTANCE

DOES there seem anger in my voice or glance
Ever? Or worse—mistrust? If this should be,
Forgive me, for the dust of circumstance
Blows in my eyes, and makes them not to see.

I only see you who each day are dearer—
I see the breast on which I long to lean,
So near, yet every star in heaven is nearer,
And all the winds of twilight sweep between.

AUTUMN

AUTUMN

I WRONGED you when I dared to say
  You were unkind, untrue.
I see you love me, as to-day
  I see the skies are blue.

Oh, love, look up! Our skies in spring
  Were not more bright, more clear.
And they and you seem whispering
  The same things in my ear.

Let me consider what they say!
  The airs that fan my cheek
Are full of words. Or is it they,
  Or is it you, that speak?

AUTUMN

"Trust us," they say. "You feel our touch;
It still is soft and fair.
Trust us; but trust us not too much,
We are not what we were.

"The sun is high, and clear the sky;
The beds are starred with flowers,
But slow and still a secret chill
Is creeping through the hours.

"How warm the gleam of yonder stream!
But every morning spies
In shadows dim along the brim
A furtive fringe of ice.

"Oh fool, beware—Your heart lies bare.
Be warned in time, and fold
Your cloak across your breast or e'er
Your veins are numbed with cold.'

TO IRMA

TO IRMA

WHAT shall I write that may hint of my love for you?
My pen trembles idly, and doubts as it dips.
Teach me some name that is tender enough for you;
Or else hold me silent, my love, with your lips.

TO IRMA

TO IRMA

I HAVE known—but not known it with you—the dejection
That follows when passion has wounded affection.
I have known, but know only with you, dear, how single
Is the joy that turns pain into peace, when they mingle.

TO IRMA

TO IRMA

YOUR eyes and mine are turned towards the light.
How can our footsteps tend towards the night?
They do not, cannot :—though above our road
Sorrow and cloud are gathering like a load.
For learn this secret :—'Tis to be allowed
To make a silver lining to our cloud :
And we will turn the dark to daylight by
That one clear lamp, our own fidelity.
You will be faithful—will you ? This I know :
I shall not leave you till you make me go.

FROM BEAUDELAIRE

FROM BEAUDELAIRE

THE breeze-stirred hour draws on, when as its slim stalk swings,
Each flower sends up its soul like censer swung at prayer.
The wandering sounds and scents wheel through the evening air,
A languorous dance that forms and floats on wayward wings.
Each flower sends up its soul like censer swung at prayer,
Wails like a heart in pain the lute through all its strings,
Moves to its sound the dance that wheels on languorous wings;
Like some great lighted shrine the heavens are sad and fair.

FROM BEAUDELAIRE

Wails like a heart in pain the lute through all its strings,
A heart that hates the void circling it everywhere.
Like some great lighted shrine the heavens are sad and fair,
The sun sinks dim with blood staining his wounded wings.
A heart that hates the void circling it everywhere,
Culls from the past a store of loved and shining things.
The sun sinks dim with blood staining his wounded wings,
In me your memory shines—a monstrance raised at prayer.

TO IRMA

TO IRMA

SEE in the west the day fails!
  Low on the sands the waves sound.
Slow on the down the lean sails
  Of the mill drift round.

See in the west is one star!
  See, a day we have found fair
Is leaving the things that still are
  For the things that once were.

Hold me fast by your true hand—
  Turn away from the changed sea!
Our day forsakes the forlorn land,
  Never forsake me.

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